



U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Inspector General

SURVEY REPORT

**CONTROLS OVER VIOLATION NOTICES,
UNITED STATES PARK POLICE,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**REPORT NO. 96-I-547
MARCH 1996**



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAR 29 1996

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary

FROM: Wilma A. Lewis
Inspector General

SUBJECT SUMMARY: Final Survey Report for Your Information - "Controls Over Violation Notices, United States Park Police, National Park Service" (No. 96-I-547)

Attached for your information is a copy of the subject final survey report.

The United States Park Police did not adequately control or account for all violation notice forms assigned to its officers. As a result, Park Police records did not contain information on the disposition of 92 (34 percent) of the 270 notice forms we reviewed, and the Park Police had no assurance that these notices were defaced, lost, or voided for valid reasons. Park Police guidance requires that all requests for cancellation of violation notice forms be made in writing and be approved by an officer in the rank of captain or above and that these requests be maintained at the stations. However, the Park Police was not enforcing this requirement and did not have a system for reconciling lists of blank notice forms assigned to officers with lists of notices issued. The Park Police agreed with our recommendation to establish additional control procedures to ensure that violation notice forms are voided properly and accounted for appropriately.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me at (202) 208-5745.

Attachment



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAR 29 1996

SURVEY REPORT

To: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

From: Judy Harrison *Judy Harrison*
Assistant Inspector General for Audits

Subject: Final Survey Report on Controls Over Violation Notices, United States Park Police, National Park Service (No. 96-I-547)

INTRODUCTION

We have completed a survey of the adequacy of controls over violation notice forms at the United States Park Police, National Park Service. The objective of the review was to determine whether the Park Police maintained proper controls and accountability over these notice forms in the Washington, D.C. area.

BACKGROUND

The United States Park Police is part of the National Park Service's National Capital Region. The Park Police has about 660 authorized police officers, including about 500 for the Washington, D.C. area. The Park Police maintains several police stations, which assign books of violation notice forms to police officers. When a violation is noted, the officer writes either a District of Columbia notice or a Federal notice (for violations outside the District) and leaves a carbon copy of the notice with the violator or on the violator's vehicle. The officer retains one copy. If the violation involves an arrest, the officer personally delivers the original notice to the District of Columbia Corporation Counselor the U.S. Attorney's Office. If an arrest is not involved, the original notice is turned in to a Park Police station (not necessarily the same station that issued the book of notices) at the end of the officer's shift for transmittal to the Park Police Headquarters Records Section the next day. The Records Section enters selected information from notices issued for violations into a data base that is used for statistical reports and performance appraisals. The notices are then sent to the Central Violations Bureau of the U.S. Administrative Office of the Courts or to the District of Columbia Bureau of Traffic Adjudication.

In 1994, the Park Police issued about 93,300 violation notices in the Washington, D.C. area. Most notices were issued for motor vehicle violations and other misdemeanors, but notices were also issued for felonies such as drug and weapon offenses. The estimated revenue from motor vehicle violations and other misdemeanors in 1994 was about \$3 million for about 42,500 moving violations and about \$2 million for about 50,800 nonmoving violations, based on average fines of \$75 and \$40, respectively. However, because payments are sent directly to the Central Violations Bureau or the Bureau of Traffic Adjudication when a court appearance is not required, the Park Police does not maintain information on the amount of revenues actually received.

SCOPE OF SURVEY

Our survey was conducted at the Park Police Headquarters, the Central District Station, and the Office of Audit and Evaluation, all in Washington, D.C. We also visited the Park Police station in Glen Echo, Maryland, and the Court Liaison Office in Alexandria, Virginia. To accomplish our objective, we reviewed current policy and guidance on accountability and controls over violation notices and reviewed Park Police records concerning violation notices issued during the period December 1994 to April 1995. In addition, we interviewed Park Police officers to determine the extent of compliance with existing procedures and the disposition of the notice forms that had been assigned to them.

Our survey was conducted in accordance with the “Government Auditing Standards,” issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Accordingly, we included such tests of records and other auditing procedures that were considered necessary under the circumstances. As part of the survey, we evaluated the Park Police system of internal controls to the extent that we considered necessary to accomplish the survey objectives. We found weaknesses in the Park Police’s system of accounting for violation notice forms assigned to Park Police officers. These weaknesses are discussed in the Results of Survey section of this report. Our recommendations, if implemented, should improve the internal controls in this area.

We also reviewed the Department of the Interior’s Annual Statement and Report to the President and the Congress, required by the Federal Managers’ Financial Integrity Act, for fiscal year 1994 and determined that there were no reported weaknesses related to the objective and scope of our survey.

PRIOR AUDIT COVERAGE

Neither the Office of Inspector General nor the General Accounting Office has issued any reports during the past 5 years concerning controls over violation notices at the United States Park Police.

RESULTS OF SURVEY

The United States Park Police was not adequately controlling or accounting for all violation notice forms assigned to its officers. Park Police Memorandum No .10, Series 1989, and the Park Police Guideline Manual OD/PB/2 require that requests for cancellation of violation notice forms be made in writing and be approved by an officer in the rank of captain or above and that these requests be maintained at the stations. However, the Park Police was not enforcing this requirement and did not have a system for reconciling lists of blank notice forms assigned to officers with lists of notices issued. As a result, Park Police records did not contain information on the disposition of 92 (34 percent) of the 270 notice forms we reviewed, and the Park Police had no assurance that these notices were defaced, lost, or voided for valid reasons.

Cancellation of Notices

Park Police Memorandum No. 10, Series 1989, issued in August 1989, and Park Police Guideline Manual OD/PB/2, issued in July 1988, require cancellation of notice forms that are defaced, lost, or prepared erroneously. In order to cancel a notice form, the officer is required to submit a brief memorandum to the Worksite Commander through the immediate supervisor. The memorandum is to include the following information: (1) the circumstances that necessitated the cancellation; (2) the serial number of the notice form being canceled; (3) the serial number of the replacement notice form (if applicable); and (4) the officer's signature. If the supervisor concurs with the officer's request, the memorandum is signed to indicate approval. All copies of the notice form and the memorandum are to be submitted to the Worksite Commander for review and approval.

Upon approval by the Worksite Commander, copies of the notice form are to be marked "VOID," and the name and the badge number of the issuing officer are to be recorded on the copies. Additionally, the serial number of any replacement notice form is to be recorded on the voided notice form. A brief explanation of the reason for cancellation and the Worksite Commander's signature are to be entered on a Violation Notice Transmittal (NPS Form 10-49) and sent to the Bureau of Traffic Adjudication for final approval.

Based on our sample of 270 violation notice forms consisting of 30 notice forms assigned to each of nine officers of the Central District station during December 1994, we found that notice forms were not being canceled as required. Specifically, 92 of the 270 notice forms assigned to eight of the nine officers were not listed on the transmittal of notices sent from the station to the Records Section during the period December 1994 to April 1995. Although the officers were not required to keep copies of the notice forms after a case was closed, we asked them if they could account for the 92 unlisted notice forms. The officers said that 42 of the notice

forms were “probably voided” and “thrown away,” 30 were “probably shredded” because of incorrect dates, 6 had been sent to the District of Columbia Corporation Counsel, and 1 was found in a locker. The officers stated that they did not know what happened to the remaining 13 notice forms. None of the officers had prepared the required memoranda to their respective Worksite Commanders. We interviewed six other officers at the Central District station to determine how they would dispose of notice forms that had been damaged, defaced, or prepared in error. Four of the officers stated that they would throw the notice forms away, one said he would “probably” throw the notice forms away, and one said that he would “write a memo” to his supervisor to have the notice forms canceled.

Control Procedures

The Park Police did not maintain a centralized records system to account for all violation notice forms assigned to individual police officers. The Park Police had issued guidelines and had established some controls to account for violation notice forms, such as requiring officers to sign for blank notice forms received, requiring officers to prepare transmittal sheets for notice forms sent to the Records Section, and requiring the Records Section to prepare transmittal sheets listing the notice forms sent to the Central Violations Bureau or the Bureau of Traffic Adjudication. However, the Records Section did not receive copies or listings of notice forms that had been defaced, lost, or voided or that were personally delivered to the U.S. Attorney or the Corporation Council. Furthermore, although the Records Center maintains a data base of selected information from notices issued for violations, the data base does not include the serial numbers of the notices. Therefore, the Records Section did not have the information needed to reconcile notice forms assigned to police officers with the disposition of those notice forms. Accordingly, the Park Police did not have a system for identifying missing notice forms that may have been improperly canceled or voided.

While we believe that a comprehensive centralized system would help the Park Police control and account for all notice forms, we are also aware that such a system could be expensive and could result in the use of resources presently directed toward law enforcement efforts. However, we believe that implementation of additional controls, such as those used by other local police departments, would provide greater assurance that notice forms are not canceled improperly. For example, police departments in the Virginia areas of Fairfax County, Alexandria City, and Arlington County require all notice forms to be turned in and accounted for and all voided notice forms to be left in the officer’s notice book and turned in to the officer’s first-line supervisor. The supervisor then signs or initials the voided notice forms and sends them to the centralized records section to be entered into a data base of notices assigned, issued, and voided. By querying the data base, missing notice forms are identified. Fairfax County police officers are also required to record in the notice form book whether the notice was issued or voided.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Chief, United States Park Police, establish additional reasonable control procedures to ensure that violation notice forms are voided properly and accounted for appropriately.

United States Park Police Response and Office of Inspector General Reply

The February 21, 1996, response (see Appendix 1) from the Chief, United States Park Police, concurred with our recommendation and identified actions that have been or will be undertaken to correct deficiencies in the procedures to control violation notice forms.

Based on the response, we consider the recommendation resolved but not implemented. Accordingly, the recommendation will be referred to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for tracking of implementation, and no further response to the Office of Inspector General is required (see Appendix 2).

The legislation, as amended, creating the Office of Inspector general requires semiannual reporting to the Congress on all audit reports issued, actions taken to implement audit recommendations, and identification of each significant recommendation on which corrective action has not been taken.



United States Department of the Interior

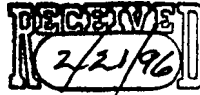
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UNITED STATES PARK POLICE

Headquarters
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO

A26(NCA-AE)

FEB 21 1996



Memorandum

To : Management Officer, National Park Service

From: Chief, United States Park Police

Subject: Report Number E-IN-NPS-010-95

7/2/21/96

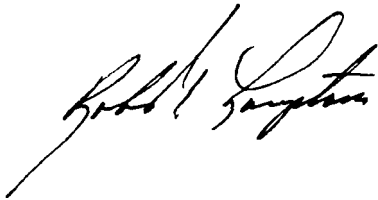
The single recommendation contained in the draft report states: "We recommend that the Chief, United States Park Police, establish additional reasonable control procedures to ensure that violation notice forms are voided properly and accounted for appropriately. " We concur with this recommendation.

We began a review to correct the deficiencies in our accountability of violation notices even before this evaluation was completed. To correct the deficiency we have undertaken or propose the following:

- (1) Developing additional cost effective procedures to tighten control of existing sign-out procedures for violation notices to ensure the integrity of the system. We have contacted our property office to ensure that once again the Form 10-50 and Form 10-50(A)'s are issued through our property office and not the Brentwood Storehouse . Completed.
- (2) Revising the weekly report submitted by the court liaisons in the Washington metropolitan area to the Commander. Audits and Evaluations Unit to include a list of the violation notices voided. Completed.
- (3) Redesign of the Form 10-50(.4), Violation Notice--Completed. We are working with the various jurisdictions to make additional improvement-s to the other violation notices issued.
- (4) Perform spot checks to verify compliance with Force policy--Completed. The Commander, Audits and Evaluations Unit will ensure periodic spot checks are performed. The first check is scheduled for the week of March 3, 1996.

(5) Increase coordination with the involved agencies and jurisdictions to develop a better system of accountability for issued violation notices. Ongoing.

(6) Revise Force policy to address deficiencies identified as a result of the audit. The Commander, Planning and Development will ensure that all policies pertaining to issuance and disposition of violation notices are reviewed. Target date is June 3, 1996. Proposals to correct the identified deficiencies will be provided to me by September 6, 1996.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Langston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

STATUS OF AUDIT REPORT RECOMMENDATION

Finding/Recommendation Reference	Status	Action Required
1	Resolved; not implemented.	No further response to the Office of Inspector General is required. The recommendation will be referred to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for tracking of implementation.

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